

THE THRESHOLD OF ADULthood (II)

not understand how Europeans could draw such a sharp line 867
and equate ignorance with the absence of a literature and [212]
written traditions. When talking about how they instructed
their young people in the traditional knowledge about the
natural world and their own national law and history, they
pointed out that there were no set periods for this kind of
teaching, but that there was a recognition that the young
man, before or about the time when he himself became a
father, should know what his father knew. We will begin 128
then with some indication of the kind of matters included
in this traditional store of knowledge, recognizing that re-
ference can be made only to a small selection from it. We
will go on in the second half of the chapter to the other kind
of knowledge which was inseparably connected with practi-
cal and technical skills.

Ngoni traditional knowledge: the reckoning of time

The Ngoni had a system of reckoning time and a recognized 805
calendar. This consisted of thirteen lunar months in the year,
reckoned from the first appearance of each new moon, and
beginning with our December as the first month. The names
of the months are all related to natural events, and these as
the following list shows were in five main groups: when cer-
tain wild animals had their young; the time of bitter cold
and frosts; when the hawks came to catch chickens; when
certain trees fruited; when the new crops were ripe and the
former first fruit ceremony took place.

NGONI NAMES FOR MONTHS

1 <i>Impala</i>	Antelopes have their young
2 <i>Intakoni</i>	Gnu have their young
3 <i>Impuso</i>	Tasting new crops
4 <i>Inyati</i>	Buffaloes have their young
5 <i>Indlovu</i>	Elephants have their young
6 <i>Ilizi elincinyane</i>	Beginning of cold weather;
7 <i>Ilizi elikulu</i>	Great cold weather

CHILDREN OF THEIR FATHERS

805	8 <i>Ukholo omasingane</i>	Hawks fly and hover
	9 <i>Ukholo omkhulu</i>	Hawks catch chickens
	10 <i>Isiganyane esincinyane</i>	Trees begin to flower
	11 <i>Isiganyane esikhulu</i>	Trees fruiting
	12 <i>Inhlachana</i>	Trees fruiting
	13 <i>Umgano</i>	Trees fruiting

- [132] The months were more generally grouped in two main seasons: the rains, whose name meant that the earth was 'clothed and decorated with new grass, leaves and flowers'; and the dry season, the time for moving village sites, felling trees and clearing bush for new gardens, castrating oxen. It was the true Ngoni families who knew the names for the months and the relation of months to the seasons. Among these families in every Ngoni village there were men who watched the sun's movements, and noted the hill or tall trees behind which the sun set when it reached its most southerly point. This was for them one of the signals that the rains were near. If the rains did not begin when the sun reached this point, they announced that this year the rains were delayed and the crops would probably suffer. When the *inkatu* bird [825] began to sing, the first man who heard it went to tell his neighbours to repair their hoe handles and begin to clear the fields, for the rains and the planting season was at hand. [824] When a large flat mushroom appeared in the woodland, it too was the herald of rain.

805 Not only were these months and the seasons they indicated the means of regulating work. They were also the way by which the Ngoni reckoned time. They had rods for each month and notches for the days. They took these with them on campaigns, and when returning they produced the rods, and pointing to the notches they said: 'On the sixth day of the seventh month we began fighting against X's village,' or 'We reached that river on the first day of the fifth month.' 211 Ngoni elders were however quick to point out that they were all trained from childhood up to have excellent memories,

159 In 1828 Zongendaba, who had met with Mailikani near the border of Portuguese
161 East Africa, fought him over a petty disagreement, which it is alleged was a dog fight.
173 Mailikani beat Zongendaba, who moved on into Portuguese East Africa between the
578 Limpopo and the Sabi Rivers and united himself with Manukusa; this was the year of
643 Tshaka's assassination. In 1831 we find Manukusa and Zongendaba midway between
648 the Limpopo and Zambesi Rivers.

In the year 1833, in which Manukusa attacked the Portuguese and drove them
out of Espírito Santo (Lourenço Marques), Manukusa and Zongendaba disagreed and
a fight took place, after which Zongendaba and his following, accompanied by
Mhlabawadabuka, a brother of Manukusa, continued the migration north.

In the following year, 1834, on the border of what is now S. Rhodesia, Zongendaba
broke with Mhlabawadabuka and proceeded in a north-westerly direction, where at the
Ingwe-Kwini River he met the Ba-Loni or Ba-Nyal, whom he destroyed; their chief,
Mambo, was killed, some thirty miles from the battlefield at Intaba-Zi-Ka-Mambo.

[805] In November of the year 1835, at the time of an eclipse, a passage was found across the
Ukwembo River (Zambesi) at Manyere on the south bank, nearly opposite Zumbo on
the north bank in Portuguese East Africa. At the crossing a dispute arose between
Zongendaba and an induna, Ngabi Masoko, who with a small following remained on the
south bank and, it is stated, crossed over the following year near Tete.

Zongendaba, after crossing, halted for a period whilst his impis looted the surrounding
country; his camp was built at Mkofo. About 1839 a movement in an easterly direction
was made, it is said, by Gwasa Tole, who was a brother-in-law to Zongendaba and his
Chief Counsellor, because, acting on Zongendaba's instructions, he had put to death one
[645] of Zongendaba's wives for infidelity; Zongendaba followed. The direction was changed,
[684] after passing to the west of the present Fort Jameson, to a more northerly one passing
the head-waters of the Bua River en route.

In 1840 at Chula, Mheliwa or Mombasa was born, son of Zongendaba by his wife
Ummoo. Thence on to the Bakura Valley.

In 1842 Zongendaba arrived in the Fipa country, and the next two years were spent
in raiding the surrounding country of the Sukuma and Maswa.

159 In 1845 Zongendaba died. It is stated that he had never seen or been seen by a
173 European, that he was fierce with his soldiers and his wives who, on the least excuse, he put
643 to death, that he was very kind and considerate to his captives, and that he listened to
[764] two men only, Gwasa Tole and Njokwane. He died at Mapupu in the Fipa country
[428] and was buried in a black ox skin near the Nyinabul River. On his death bed he gave
his amagui to his eldest son and heir (by his Great Wife, Sowera), Ntatu Mpenani, who was
then in his twentieth year.

159 (3) Louwawa Ngumayo was the wife of Zongendaba—"The Great Wife, Inkoshani".
173 She was born before the accession of Tshaka, about the year 1800, in the tribal area near
562 St. Lucia Bay. She was Zongendaba's "great chosen wife" and died during the great